1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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to the husband of the pregnant woman. We carefully say "the husband of the pregnant woman" rather than "the father of the child" because the right resided in the male head of the household at the time of the birth. Although he was ordinarily both the father of the child and the husband of its mother, there were naturally occasions when a child was born after the death of its father, in which case the right of betrothal unquestionably belonged to the mother's new husband. The clearest statement of this rule is to say that the right of betrothal of all newly born females resided in the husband of the mother at the time of the girl's birth. "He who named the child bestowed it."

In most human societies the proportion of males and females in the population is approximately equal, except in the older age-groups where women predominate owing to their tendency to live longer than men. The Tiwi conformed to this norm biologically, but their cultural insistence that all females of every age be married resulted in further unusual features of the domestic situation. No such compulsory marriage was required or expected of males. Hence, the total female population, but only part of the male population, was married. Mathematically this permitted, indeed required, a high degree of plural marriage. The men who held the right to betroth—namely, the fathers of the female babies—could, within certain limits imposed by the kinship system, bestow their about-to-be-born or newly born daughters where they wished, and they certainly did not bestow them on about-to-be-born or newly born males. On the contrary, they bestowed them, generally speaking, where some tangible return was to be anticipated. Put bluntly, in Tiwi culture daughters were an asset to their father, and he invested these assets in his own welfare. He therefore bestowed his newly born daughter on a friend or an ally, or on somebody he wanted as a friend or an ally. Such a person was apt to be a man near his own age or at least an adult man, and hence perhaps forty years or so older than the newly born baby bestowed upon him as a wife. Or, the father might bestow an infant daughter on a man—or some close relative of such a man—who had already bestowed an infant daughter upon him, thus in effect swapping infant daughters. Obviously, the fathers who did the swapping, even if they were not quite the same age themselves, were bound to be many years older than the infant wives they thus received from each other. Or, thirdly, a father looking for a suitable male upon whom to bestow his infant daughter's hand might decide to use her as old-age insurance—in which case he selected as her future husband not one of the older adult men who would be old when he himself was old, but a likely looking youngster "with promise"; that is, a youth in his late twenties or thirties who showed signs of being a good hunter and a good fighting man, and who was clearly on his way up in tribal power and influence. Such a youth, in his late twenties at the time of betrothal, would, with luck, be in his prime as "a big man" in about twenty years—a time when the father of the infant daughter would be getting old and decrepit and much in need of an influential son-in-law who was obligated to him.

There were other bases upon which infant daughters were betrothed,

6: Hart E-5 (1928-1930) 1954 0120 Tiwi 0120

pressed laughter on the other side of the fire as he recalled to himself the amusing incidents of the day. Even when alone with his thoughts he was still laughing. This suggests that Tip's gaiety was "natural" rather than contrived for effect, and there is support for the suggestion in the fact that Tip was regarded as a poor hunter, because, as one critic put it, "He doesn't concentrate on killing the kangaroo but plays jokes on the kangaroo and makes a game out of hunting." Another indication that when alone he behaved in the same irresponsible manner that he exhibited in public.

The second ground that suggests that fun-loving and gaiety are not incompatible with increasing age and tribal status is the fact that there were many old and venerable Tiwi who loved fun and laughter just as Tipperary did. One such was Tu'untalumi, one of the most elderly of the Tiklauila, a man of weight, dignity and poise. He was a highly respected person, an expert in ceremonial performances and a rigid traditionalist in all things. But despite his age and dignity this man was as given to fun and laughter as Tip was. The main difference was that Tip's laughter was loud, boisterous and prankish; Tu'untalumi's jokes and quips were delivered in low, gentle tones and his laughter was dignified and restrained. But within the limitations imposed by his status he got as much fun and extracted as much humor out of life as Tip, illustrating the point that age and seniority in Tiwi do not at all necessarily mean sourness and lack of humor. Although the two were not related Tipperary played up to the old man and courted and valued his approval while Tu'untalumi clearly liked having Tip around him. They were kindred souls but separated by more than forty years of age.

As is probably the case in most cultures, so among the Tiwi—the genuinely gay person is popular. Tipperary though the next to youngest of Turimpi's sons was the one with most friends. Perhaps significantly, his friends were among both his seniors and juniors, but not among his brothers. Antonio was the only brother who sought Tip's company and this can be accounted for either by the fact that Antonio, when not harassed by his status, was an easy-going, friendly and none too intelligent man who laughed readily even when none too sure of what the joke was, or that he found Tip's company a relaxation from the cares of state. Of the other brothers, the self-righteous and puritanical Mariano considered Tip frivolous and deplored (or was jealous of) the tendency of white men to become fond of him. Louis actively disliked Tip perhaps because his love affairs were an obvious target for some of Tip's better quips. "Perhaps he is going into the bush to take a nap" was one of his comments when he saw Louis disappearing among the trees. With his full brother Bob, Tip had few close ties, perhaps because Bob spent much of his time in Darwin, but even more likely, one suspects, because Bob, an indefinite and colorless youngster, shrank from attracting public notice, whereas Tip was always drawing attention to himself, with the result that Bob to save himself embarrassment avoided his company.

Outside his siblings, Tipperary's gaiety earned him the liking and companionship of the younger men and made him a favorite younger man of some

6: Hart E-5 (1928-1930) 1954 OI20 Tiwi OI20

of the oldest and most respected seniors, particularly of Tu'untalumi and those swayed by his opinion. It follows from this that Tip though given to jokes and pranks cannot be written off as merely a privileged buffoon. On the contrary his wit and gaiety earned him friends and his friends gave him influence out of proportion to his youth. Some insight into this is supplied by the shadow of the ubiquitous Louis. Tipperary, through the missionaries' efforts on behalf of monogamy, had obtained a wife at a much earlier age than would have been possible under pre-white conditions, and according to the women, who have their own sources of information about such things, Louis was strongly attracted by Tipperary's wife. Since Louis was not noted for restraint or self-discipline in these matters the obvious question was why he did not press his attention on her as he had done on numerous other women, including the wife of Tip's younger brother Bob. "Oh no, he doesn't dare chase after Tipperary's wife. The old men would be very angry if he did anything to her," was the reply of the old hags who were the local gossip columnists. This belief that the "old men" would undoubtedly protect Tip's wife while they had noticeably failed to protect Bob's wife from a similar threat (see below) is a pretty clear indication that the two young men had very different places in tribal estimation—a fact that in turn can be correlated with no status differential between them and leaves only the "personality" difference between the two men to account for it. Tip was popular with the control groups, Bob was not, therefore the control groups would support Tip because they liked him. They were indifferent toward Bob.[10]

To summarize Tipperary is relatively easy. He was a cheery, relaxed, fun-loving young man who enjoyed his own humor but enjoyed it all the more if it were shared by an appreciative audience. He was therefore gregarious, friendly, outgoing and extroverted. He would have been a good Rotarian or a better disk-jockey. Because of these traits he was noticed a great deal more by his elders than his age justified and the notice he received was usually favorable. He was popular in a way none of his brothers were, and because of this popularity was able to express opinions and exert influence to an extent unusual for one of his years. In a society where men under 30 are expected to be seen and not heard, Tip was constantly being heard. This was only possible because his natural gaiety and warmth prejudiced almost everybody in his favor. He was the sort of man about whom it is often said in our culture "he always makes a party go," or, "he is the sort of person who just naturally makes friends."

BOB

The youngest brother, Bob, needs only two words to describe him—complete nonentity. About 27 or 28 when I knew him and, because of the Mission's efforts, married a good deal younger than he would have been under pre-white conditions, Bob, whatever the occasion or circumstances, was always part of the background. Like many of the younger Tiwi he was inclined to spend part of each year in Darwin working for the white men, and by them he was regarded as a good, willing, obliging and respectful worker.